

*Town of Weymouth
Massachusetts*

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Press Release

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Weymouth Awarded \$559,418 SAFER Grant to Hire Four Firefighters

The Weymouth Fire Department was awarded a SAFER Grant which will cover a portion of the salary and benefits to hire four fire fighters and increase staffing levels.

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Weymouth, MA – On September 18th, FEMA announced that the Weymouth Fire Department was awarded a [Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response](#) (SAFER) grant through the agency's Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program. The grant will provide funding in the amount of \$559,418 for the hiring of four new fire fighters. The grant covers a portion of the new hires' personnel expenses. The additional four new firefighters are part of the Administration's plan to re-open Station 2, which has been closed since 2008.

"My Administration has been proactive in enhancing aspects of all of our Town public safety functions and this grant is furthering those goals," **said Mayor Hedlund.** "Additionally, the SAFER grant enables the Town to phase in the staffing increase in a way that is financially responsible and allows the Town to prepare for the increases over the course of the three-year grant."

"The SAFER grant will allow the Weymouth Fire Department to increase the fire suppression force, decrease response times and allow our firefighters to better protect the citizens of Weymouth during an emergency situation," **said Fire Chief Keith Stark.**

The SAFER grant program provides funding to communities around the country for either hiring or recruitment and retention of fire staff. According to the program site, the goals of the SAFER program are to provide funding directly to fire departments in order to enhance the departments' ability to comply with staffing, response, and operational standards established by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). The SAFER grant award will be spread over three grant periods, or approximately three calendar years, likely beginning in January of 2020. The federal share for the first and second year of the award will cover 75% of the usual annual cost of a first-year firefighter while the Town will cover the remaining 25% of the costs through a local match. In the final grant year, the federal funding will cover 35% of the costs and the Town will be responsible for the remaining 65%. Ultimately, the total program will result in an investment of \$935,124 over the grant period.

"Increasing staffing has been a priority for me since becoming Chief in 2013. Mayor Hedlund has supported the Fire Department's budget by increasing our staff each year," **Chief Stark stated.** "We are currently staffed at 95 firefighters; with the SAFER grant we will be hiring 4 more to a full complement of 99 firefighters. The addition of these 4 firefighters will increase safety as well as help in the mission to open up Station 2 in the near future."

Weymouth was previously awarded a SAFER grant in 2011 through the FY10 program. This provided for the hiring of 5 fire fighters in the wake of departmental layoffs caused by the recession. Since the FY10 award, the Town has applied for the funding in 2012 and 2017 for additional staff to re-open fire station two but was unsuccessful. This most recent award will provide for the funding necessary to increase staffing to pre-recession levels and begin planning for the potential re-opening of station two. When the previous SAFER grant funding ended, Mayor Hedlund committed to over \$400,000 in additional funding to the Fire Department budget to keep these grant-funded firefighters on duty.

In addition to the increased number of firefighters, the Administration continues to work with Firefighter Union Local 1616 and Chief Stark on the plan to re-open Station 2.

For additional information on the SAFER grant program, visit the FEMA site at: <https://www.fema.gov/staffing-adequate-fire-emergency-response-grants>

For additional information on the Town program, please contact the [Weymouth Fire Department](#) at 781-337-5151.

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